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MONTANA PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS

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MONTANA PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS

Montana State Library
Helena
1983

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FOREWORD

This revision of Montana Public Library Standards began in 1979 with the appointment of an Ad Hoc Committee for the Revision of Public Library Standards by the Montana Library Association (MLA). The Committee included a trustee and librarians from all types of libraries. The draft of proposed new standards was prepared for review by both the Public Library and Trustee and Friends Divisions of MLA. Following this review the Executive Board of MLA adopted the standards. At its December, 1982 meeting the Montana State Library Commission endorsed the new standards as a replacement for the 1969 Montana Public Library Standards.

Montana's 1969 Standards were based on the American Library Association's (ALA) **Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966**. When the Public Library Association of ALA published new standards in 1979 they were a departure from the previous standards.

The new ALA standards, **The Public Library Mission Statement and its Imperatives for Service**, emphasize the planning process and focus on meeting the needs of individual communities rather than proposing a single set of standards valid for all libraries. Montana librarians, remembering Montana Standards stated, "From time to time, the standards in this statement should be reviewed and revised to keep them meaningful and current" believed it was time for a revision which would reflect the new direction of the national standards.

The Public Library Mission Statement points out in the past standards have been used by public librarians to justify budget requests, as a basis for library development and as a guide to improving library services. It is hoped public library trustees and Montana librarians will, in the future, use this publication to develop standards for their own libraries which assess the library needs of their individual communities and its residents. These standards will assist them in meeting those needs.

Alene Cooper, Chair
MLA Ad Hoc Committee for the
Revision of Public Library Standards

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Revision of Public Library Standards — 1979

Glenda Bell—Riverside Junior High School Library, Billings
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GOVERNANCE, FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

Governance, funding, and administration of the public library in Montana must reflect the following realities:

1. Every person needs and has a right to access to the human record, appropriate to her or his own level of concern.
2. The public library is uniquely responsible for providing and coordinating this access for its total community.
3. Since a mobile population now moves freely in and out of political jurisdictions, the local public library can no longer consider its local constituency as its only responsibility.
4. The local public library can no longer meet the needs of its local constituency solely with local resources or local funding.
5. The needs of people in whatever support area cannot be met by the resources of any one type of library or libraries.

STANDARDS

Montana law provides for the establishment and maintenance of public libraries. Government officials, library boards, librarians, friends of libraries, and other interested citizens should be familiar with the legal provisions affecting library service.

1. **Library boards:** All public libraries as agencies of local government shall be operated by boards of trustees appointed by the local governing authority(ties). Library board members shall be chosen because of their interest in libraries and their concern for total library service to the community, to assure broad representation from the community, and to provide periodic infusion of new ideas. Board members must be aware of their duties and responsibilities as stipulated in Montana state law.
2. **Board meetings:** Meetings of the board of trustees shall be held regularly. The librarian shall attend board meetings as secretary to the board, and prepare the agenda for these meetings in consultation with the chairman. These meetings shall be open to the public and shall be publically announced prior to the stipulated meeting date.
3. **By-laws:** All library boards of trustees shall adopt by-laws for the conduct of their business.

4. **Policies:** The trustees, with the advice of the librarian, shall adopt written policies and objectives for the operation of the library (i.e.: for book selection, personnel management, hours and extent of service, etc.) and annually review these policies. The library's policies should include the adoption of the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement. The board shall delegate active management of the library to the librarian, giving him/her full responsibility for carrying out these policies.

5. **Planning:** The board, together with the librarian and the staff, is responsible for a five-year plan for library development with stated goals and objectives, in accordance with the Montana plan for the development of library service to insure that such planning is recognized as an essential function of local government and included with other plans for community development. This planning should include a careful evaluation of the library's services, complete documentation of its present needs and potential future activities based upon an assessment of community needs. The planning should be reviewed annually.

6. **Annual reports:** An annual report of the library's activities shall be prepared by the librarian and submitted to the board of trustees; the board in turn shall submit this report to the governing body(ies).

7. **Budget:** An annual budget for the library shall be prepared by the librarian, for discussion and adoption by the board. The board and the librarian will present the budget to the governing body(ies). The budget shall be administered in accordance with Montana state laws.

8. **Legislation:** The library board and the librarian should be actively familiar with legislation on local, state and national levels that affects libraries. This implies a high level of political sophistication and involvement on the part of public library administrators and trustees.

9. **Federations:** Montana's state-wide library federation system revolves around the concept of resource sharing. Libraries are advised to participate fully in federation activities.

10. **Multi-type** library cooperation: Public libraries must work together with other libraries in the state to assure that all resources are utilized to the fullest, working toward an expansion, rather than a duplication of library service. To this end all librarians in the state should communicate regularly with other local librarians and through their affiliation with their statewide professional organizations to keep each other informed of current activities, to plan for coordination of services, development of collections, and to consider the feasibility of joint activities.

11. **Funding:** Public libraries in the state of Montana should constantly consider new patterns of funding. Alternatives to the property tax, alternatives to the single municipality, and alternatives to the single type library must be actively investigated.

SERVICES

Public libraries exist to serve all Montanans. They should, insofar as possible, strive toward being cultural, educational, informational, recreational and rehabilitative centers for their communities.

The services of a public library are:

1) The collection of books, periodicals and other materials and the arrangement of them for convenient access and borrowing. Public libraries have a special obligation to collect local information and materials.
2) Guidance in the general use of the collection.
3) Reference service for provision of information and pursuit of research.
4) Interlibrary loan service for providing materials beyond the immediate community.
5) Opportunity for lifelong learning.

STANDARDS

1. **Hours of service:** Hours shall reflect patterns of use. Libraries are obligated to consider flexible hours in the interest of the patron.
2. **Rules and regulations:** The regulations of a public library shall be developed solely to facilitate use of its materials and should be regularly reviewed so that rules never become ends in themselves.
3. **Reference service:** Public libraries shall provide factual information and guidance in the use of reference sources. Assistance should utilize resources available, beyond the community, in the state, region and nation. Public libraries shall provide telephone reference when practical and appropriate.
4. **Programming:** Libraries are encouraged to plan creative programs in fulfilling their multiple roles.
5. **Local history:** Public libraries can make a major contribution to their communities by collecting and preserving the cultural materials of their localès. Libraries should collect books, newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, pictorial materials, personal manuscripts and business records.

RESOURCES

The public library as an institution exists to provide materials which communicate experience and ideas from one person to another. Its function is to assemble, organize, preserve, and make easily and freely available to all people printed and nonprinted materials. Public library materials may include all forms of recorded knowledge; books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspapers, pictures, slides, films, sheet music, maps, cassettes, records, microforms, videoforms, etc.

STANDARDS

1. **Policies:**
   a) Each public library board shall adopt written policies for the selection and acquisition of materials. The actual selection of the materials shall be the responsibility of the librarian and library staff.
   b) These policies shall be reviewed periodically and revised to fit the changing needs of the community and/or federation.
2. **Selection criteria:**
   a) In choosing library materials the following factors shall be considered:
      1) The extent to which the library intends to own materials, and to which it expects to borrow, both within and outside the federation.
      2) The educational, informational, and recreational needs of the community as determined by community study.
   b) Specialized appropriate resources and nationally recognized guides should be utilized in selection and evaluation of the collection in all public libraries. Access to these guides shall be available at the federation headquarters library.
   c) The library's collection shall contain materials that reflect all points of view, including the unpopular or unorthodox. Materials which serve the purposes of the library and which fulfill a community need will not be removed from the collection; nor will materials be added solely because of pressure by groups or individuals.
   d) A policy for the evaluation of material for withdrawal from the collection should be established and implemented. Public libraries, in cooperation with state library agencies, should assume leadership in negotiating a policy for retention on the regional and state level.

e) The character and emphasis of the collection of the federation headquarters and participating libraries should be influenced by the collections of other libraries in the community and federation areas.

f) Materials may be selected in any format. The format that will meet the community need for the longest period of time for the money spent should be the format purchased.

3. **Materials collection:**

a) Every public library has the responsibility to develop a materials collection sufficient to meet the majority of local needs. Federation headquarters libraries shall be responsible for developing a materials collection that meets the needs of the federation to the greatest extent possible.

4. **Films:**

a) All public libraries shall promote the use of the Montana Public Library Cooperative Film Service. This collection should be sufficient to meet the general needs of libraries of the state.

PERSONNEL

For the public library to achieve its mission, recruitment and development of personnel are of primary importance. In addition to traditional bibliographic skills, public librarians must be able to:

1. Assess needs, set objectives, and evaluate and measure the effectiveness of public library programs.
2. Select materials and provide guidance in the use of all library resources.
3. Work within the political and social structures of the community.
4. Communicate and work effectively with trustees and staff.
5. Make use of current and emerging technologies for information and communication.

These personal and professional demands require librarians with broad general education, appropriate subject knowledge, and specialized skills, with capactiy to interpret and achieve institutional objectives, and with commitment to client needs. The public library should also utilize personnel from other disciplines as needed to support the library service program.

STANDARDS

1. **Position classification:** Library positions as defined in a written job description should be clearly defined and differentiated in terms of requirements, duties and responsibilities. Each library should have a position classification plan, grouping similar positions for equitable personnel administration.
2. **Written personnel policies:** All public libraries should have a written personnel policy which requires affirmative action and equal opportunity in hiring, training and promotion of staff. That policy should include:
    a) Appointments, promotions and dismissal of personnel in libraries on the basis of merit, without regard to race, sex, marital status, national origin, political opinions, or religious beliefs.
    b) A specified probationary period for new employees, and periodic performance evaluation for all staff.
    c) Benefits, such as vacation and sick leave allowance, retirement, health and life insurance.
    d) Leaves of absence, with pay and travel allowance, for attendance at professional meetings, institutes and workshops.

3. **Salaries:**

   a) Salaries for all staff members should reflect their responsibilities within the library, or federation, and be competitive within the job market.

   b) Salary schedules should provide for regular increases. Where practicable, there should be provision for special salary increases for superior performances.

4. **Continuing education:**

   a) Staff at all levels have the right to continuing education opportunities and a responsibility to participate in them. Library administrators should be committed to continuous personnel development, providing both incentives and opportunities.

ACCESS

Each public library in Montana that cannot readily accommodate or reach all persons in the local service area should make provisions for alternative or additional services.

STANDARDS

1. Traditional library buildings should be considered as only one way to deliver library service. Innovative systems should be designed to deliver library services through a full range of physical and electronic means to the places where people live and work.
2. Library service must be provided for persons of all ages, all economic levels, and all races. Consideration of the total population should be given in regard to library material, the physical facility and patron service.
3. The public library should encourage the use of the library building for activities other than library related services.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

The public library's physical facilities must reflect its role as a community cultural, informational, educational, and rehabilitative agency. In planning new or remodeled facilities, libraries should develop building programs for the guidance of architects. Public library buildings must also comply with fire, safety, sanitary, and other applicable rules in the state and local building codes.

Because areas of service (whether local community, county or federation) vary from one part of the state to another, specific standards of size for library buildings are not suggested here. A library which serves as a federation center must obviously have a building sufficient in size to enable it to perform federation-wide services. Other library buildings within the federation may also be large, because of distance from the central library. Some basic principles, however, obtain regardless of the size of the building.

STANDARDS

1. **Planning for buildings:**
   a) No library facility should be constructed or remodeled without careful planning and analysis of the library's present service, its planned future services, and the projected growth of its service area. This type of planning frequently will require the assistance of an outside consultant, since experience in planning buildings is valuable and because a consultant can assist in examination of service needs.
   b) When possible, the librarian, library board, and key members of the library staff should visit other library buildings of appropriate size and study features that they consider successful and unsuccessful, always asking, "If you were to build again, what would you do differently?"
   c) A building program statement should be prepared by the librarian, or by the consultant if one is to be engaged. The program statement should define the library's space needs and the relationship between different areas so that the architect can develop a workable plan.
2. **Flexibility:** Library buildings should be flexible and expandable to provide for and meet changing requirements and innovations for library service.

3. **Facilities for the handicapped:** All library buildings should have ground level access (no steps, no revolving doors) for physically handicapped users, and be so designed that such persons can use all public areas.

4. **Site:** Public library buildings should be so located that the largest percentage of all the people to be served will have access to the library frequently in the normal pursuit of their activities. The site should be large enough to permit adequate off-street parking for patrons and staff.

5. **Floor layout:**
   a) The building should be so designed that related activities (both of the user and of the staff) are in adjacent areas, and that illogical flow of activity is kept to a minimum.
   b) Public areas should be so arranged as to eliminate problems of supervision; staff on duty at a circulation desk or service desk should have visual control of most of the area.

6. **Visibility:**
   a) Library personnel should be visible and identifiable.
   b) Library departments and areas should be conspicuously identified.
   c) Hours of service should be conspicuously displayed.

7. **Storage:**
   a) The public library building should have space for book display and exhibits. Libraries seek to attract and promote their services rather than simply store volumes.
   b) The library should have separate storage for operational supplies away from public areas, but adjacent to work areas.

8. **Furnishing:** Library buildings should be attractively, sturdily and invitingly furnished; they should be designed and furnished in a way to facilitate easy maintenance. Consideration should be given to the use of carpeting and air conditioning.

9. **Lighting:** Lighting in libraries should be energy efficient and adequate for library functions. Because of the critical problem of stack lighting, it is essential that placement of light fixtures not be finally determined until location of stacks is fixed.

10. **Bookmobile parking:** Libraries which serve as headquarters for bookmobiles should have enclosed space for parking and loading bookmobiles, adjacent to stack and work areas for bookmobile staff.

11. **Communication facilities:**

a) There shall be telephones in all public libraries.

b) Libraries participating in a federation should utilize the most efficient means of communication between member libraries.

c) There should be rapid communications between rural book delivery systems and the federation headquarters.

LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctinal disapproval.

3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

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ALA Council

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